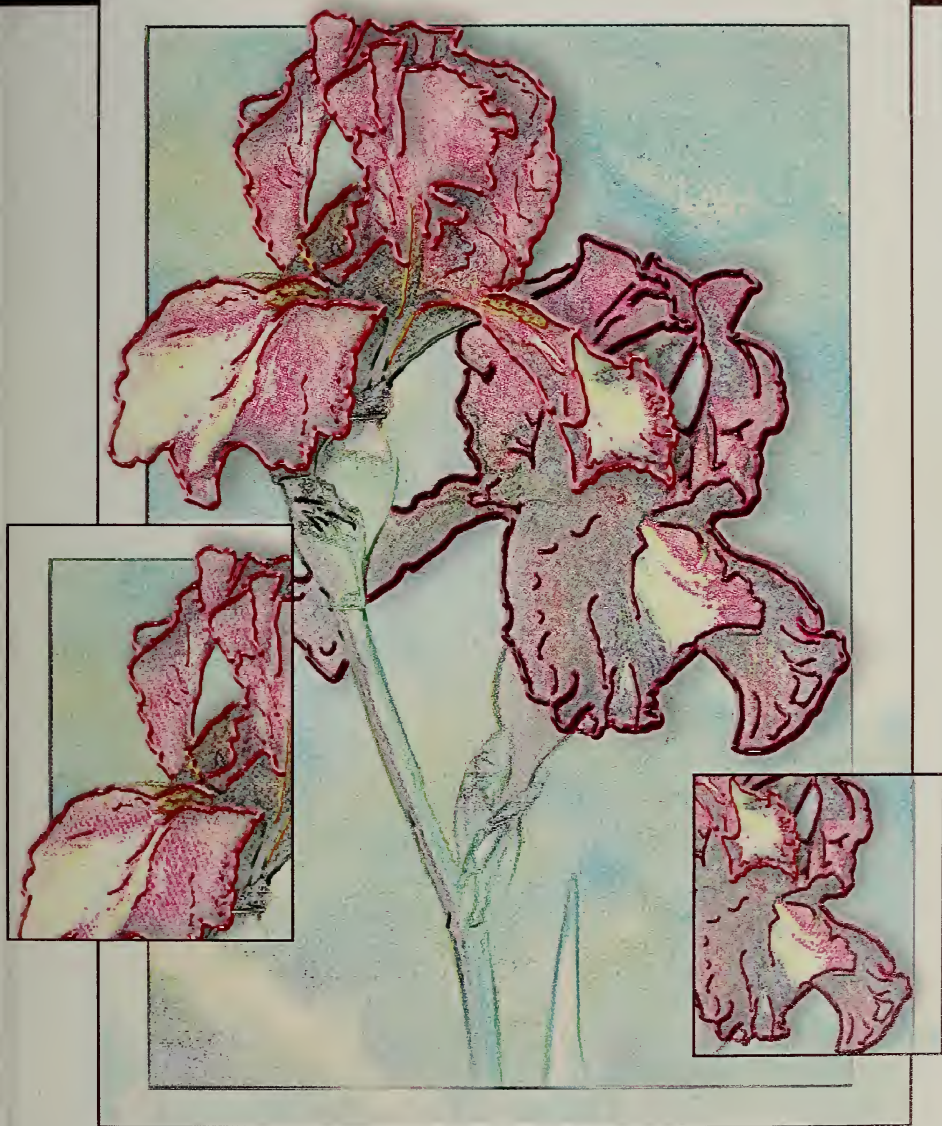
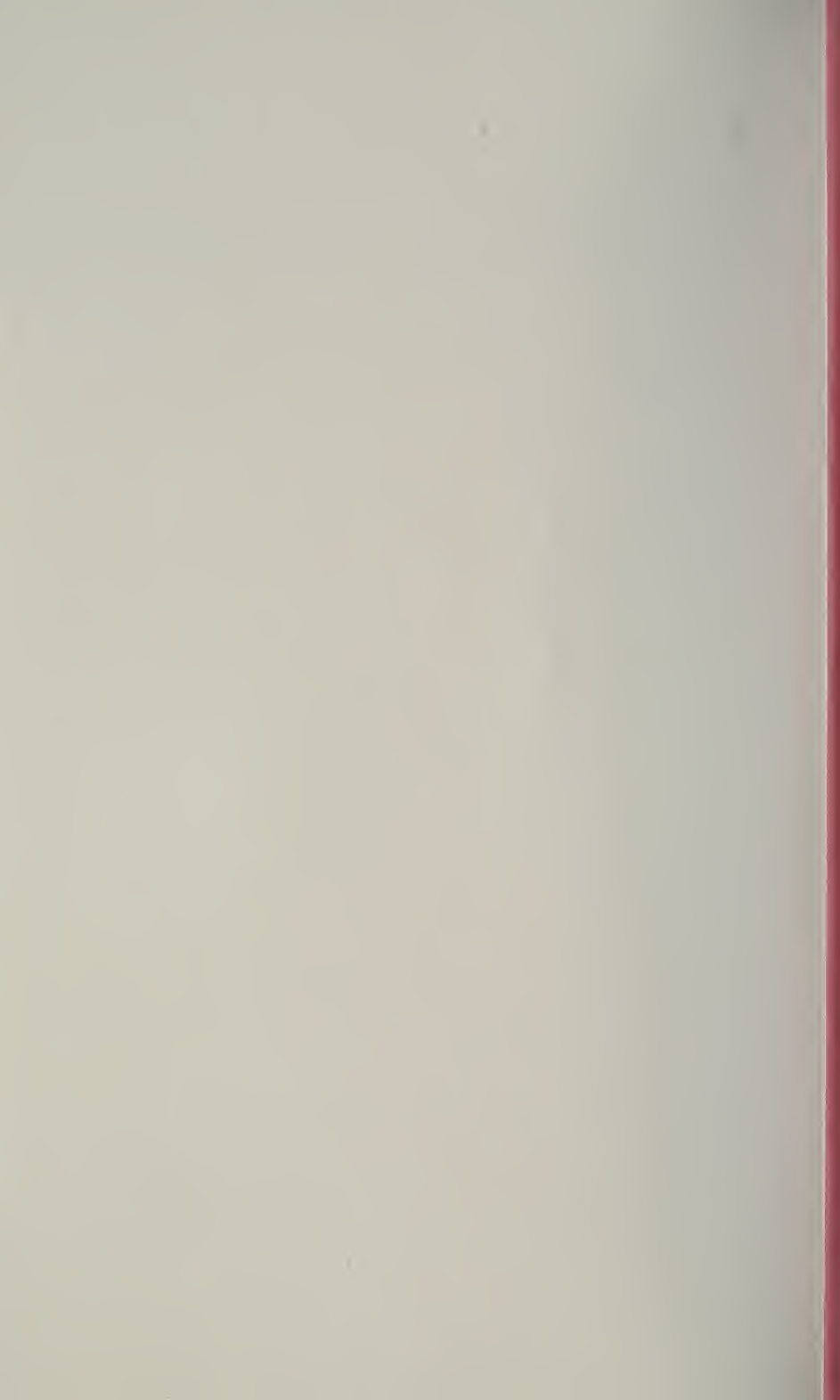


i magazine

a Literary Arts Journal



Spring 2004





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a literary arts journal
spring 2004

i magazine is a student literary arts publication of
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i magazine

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table of contents

fiction

Mark Hamilton	What Goes Around	1
Dan Prentiss	Gridlocked	13
Heidi Saulnier	A Morning Run	36
Sarah Leone	Last Hope	53
Leah Jablonski	With His Song	62
David Dionne	Amends	64

poetry

Shanna DeBlois	Sonnet 1	5
Maggie Leone	The Snow-Covered Field	11
	Sienna	12
Rebecca Helms	Soul's Quest	22
	Defiance	23
Amber Shea	Shattered Slippers	27
Nicky Smith	Needles Without Pins	29
Rebecca Martin	The Answer	35
Susan Sayball	Just Picture This	44
Marguerite Gadbois	Untitled	45
Meghan Thayer	I Could Have Been	50
Juliana Boucher	Rose Blood	51
David D. Carney, Jr.	The Word	63
Sean Johnston	Conclusions	77

essays

Roger Murray	Tribute to a Fallen Warrior	6
Jennifer Corliss	I Am the Wall	24
Lori Darcy	My Moth Dilemma	30
Michael Lozeau	The Voyage	46
Jeremy Durling	Ageless Advice	73

art work

Krisann Bousquet	Motorcycle	4
	Mourning the Columbia	10
	Gesetheme Angel	61
Andrea Maillet	Untitled	21
	Untitled	52
Shanna DeBlois	Untitled	26
	Untitled	34
	Untitled	43

“A personal victory is a smile to oneself.
The victory of a friend is a joyful shout to
heaven.”

Leah Jablonski

Mark Hamilton

What Comes Around

It is Easter Sunday 1968 and I am sitting with my father, watching the war on TV. He yells up to my mother that the body count looks good today. I am seven years old and more exited than I've ever been. My cousin Greg and his new girlfriend are coming to dinner. I yell to my younger sister, "Greg's here!" and she runs screaming to her hiding place. I've been doing this all morning and my mother scolds me. "Don't you torment your sister or you'll go to your room!" I've never heard "torment" before but I know what it means.

Tracy is terrified of our cousin Greg. We think it's his beard, but I don't even think that she knows why. Dad goes to the kitchen to get himself a drink, leaving me to watch the war alone. I want to change the channel. I love the Roadrunner, but I don't want Dad upset today. Too late, I can hear the bickering (another funny word, I know what that means too) coming from the kitchen. I hope it doesn't get bad, not today. I wait to hear the word "divorce." If I hear that, the whole day will be ruined, but I don't hear it today, good, there's still hope.

Then I hear it, low at first, and when I'm sure, I yell with all I've got, "Greg's here!" Hell breaks loose. Tracy screams and runs for her safe place, Mom screams and comes for me, Dad just stomps and I don't care. This time it's true and I'm out the door, down the walk and running up the street. I want to be the first to see, the first to be seen. I bounce at the corner of our yard, arms waving, breath caught in my throat, as they roll to a stop in front of our house.

The sound hurts my ears up this close, but even so I

move closer. The last of the dirty snow melts by the sides of the road and they slip a little as Greg kills the engine and they dismount. I just stand there, struck dumb and feeling dumber as they unstrap their helmets. More hair than I've ever seen falls from beneath and they brush the road dirt from their clothes.

My neck hurts because I can't take my eyes off of her. Even under the road dirt she's beautiful. The smooth, lean lines of her form look fast even standing still. The longest, straightest blonde hair, front forks, shine with heavenly brilliance in the late morning sun. The twin cylinders that hide her beating heart call to me at first glance. Her paint, not loud, but plain and just right, only reflects the true beauty of her being. Even her small flaws compliment her. A speck of missing chrome, a small scar, tell of time spent on the road. A small tear in the fabric of her seat, and one just below her back pocket are perfect imperfections. Her name is Harley/Sharon and I am in love. I beg aloud and pray silently, for a ride.

All through dinner I crawl the razor's edge. Pester them too much and I end up in my room, too little and I won't be noticed. Although I haven't heard it yet I know the meaning of a new word, "finesse." I have tottered on the brink of doom, thinking that I pushed too far, when Greg comes to my rescue, "Just a little ride around the block, he'll be o.k." This is it. My father looks at my mother for an eternity, then back at me. It is my Dad's choice and I'm glad because I think that he wants a ride too. "Sure, why not, and then to your chores, no more pestering."

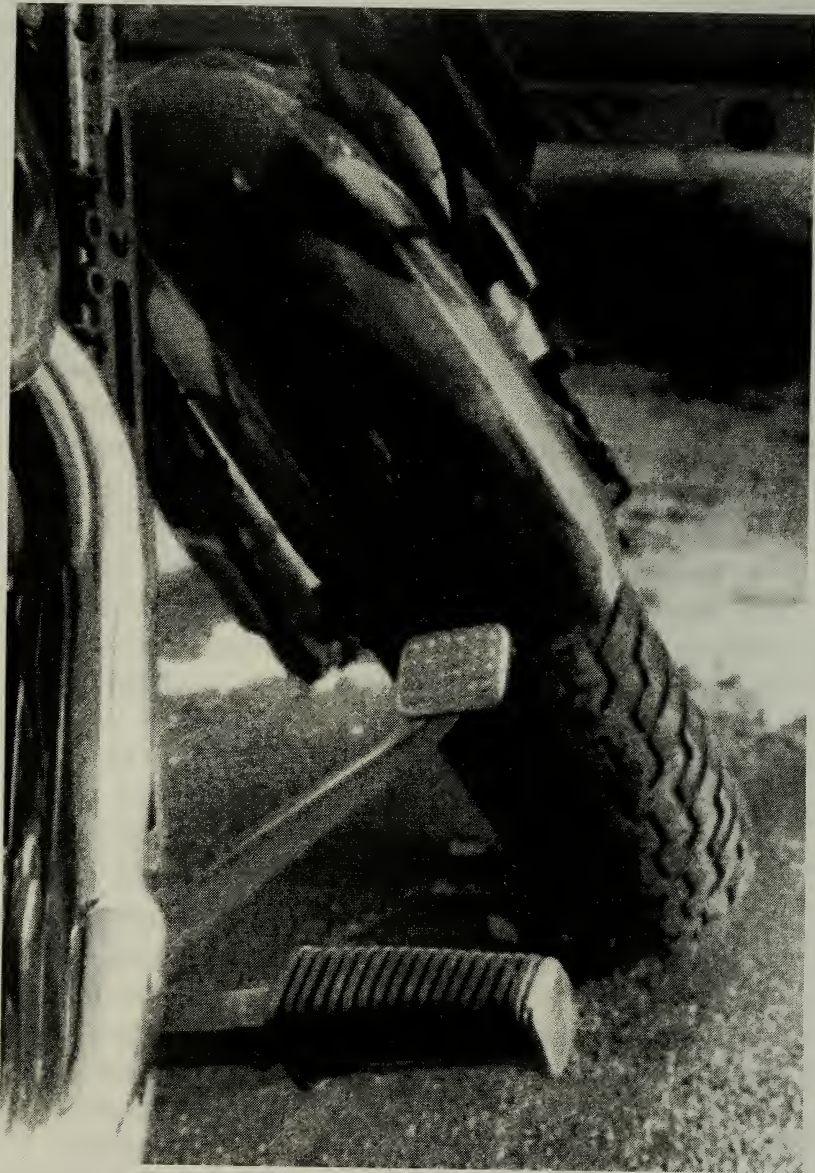
I listen intently as Greg straps the too big helmet to my head. "Lean with me, hold on here, keep your feet on the pegs even when we stop, and relax, it's just like riding your bicycle." Relax, I'm about to make lemonade in my shorts and as he kicks the engine to life with the loudest roar I've ever

heard, I almost do.

I climb on after Greg, and with Sharon and my family looking on (even my sister watches from her window) we thunder into the world. The cool spring air rushes into my lungs as we fly through the neighborhood. Everything seems brighter, more intense. I am aware, in a distracted way, of neighbors turning to look as we speed by. My eyes tear up, partly from the cold wind, and I hang on.

The feeling surges through me, rising up from the pit of my soul, and I expel it in a laugh, a high lunatic's laugh, made even more disturbing coming from one so small. My cousin looks at me with concern in the rear view mirror. He doesn't know, he can't and I can't tell him. All I can do is hang on and laugh because I am rock solid sure. The Hippies might not win the war, I might end up as part of the body count on the nightly news, my parents might divorce and go their separate ways and my sister might never come out of her hiding place, but today, for the first time in my small life I am sure, I know, and I am happy.

It is Easter Sunday 2003, I am 41 years old and we are going to spend the day with Tracy and my two young nephews. I silently hope that they're not watching the war on TV. The ancient black Harley, old when I was new, rumbles, warming in our driveway. My girlfriend Sandy appears in the doorway, pulling her long, blonde hair into a ponytail. She half-heartedly warns me of the dangers of riding so early in the season but we both know that she is wanting this as much as I. I haven't told Tracy that we're bringing the Harley, she'd worry. We pull the last of our leathers on against the cold, heading for the bike and the feeling that has made all the difference, the feeling that has shaped every day of my life. As Sandy mounts up ahead of me, I see a small tear in the fabric of her jeans, just below her back pocket. I hope my nephews notice.



Motorcycle
Krisann Bousquet

Shanna DeBois

Sonnet I

Sin in loving when that love is untrue,
From when pleasure may come, then parts,
Blind is their ignorance as is their view,
The crime of desiring, egotistic hearts,
To falsify a kiss, a promise, a vow,
To steal tempting hours of love's delight,
The dying heart lies crying forever now,
A brave sun sinking into the hideous night,
The lips of my love have yet to lie,
For I have kissed them to believe,
Thereby our unsparing love may never die,
Sweet respect we do not deceive,
 Here is the joy; my friend and I are one,
 On the western horizon still rises our sun.

Roger Murray

Tribute to a Fallen Warrior

The stars are a bright white in the clear, early morning northern Virginia sky. The eastern horizon is turning a light blue hue. I sit on the earth, light my pipe and quietly pray. My eldest son, Powerful Walking Wolf, sits beside me. We share a pipe and silently watch the horizon, as we have many times before. We reminisce of our life together. I tell him of how his presence has enriched my life, that I have always strived to be a better person because of him. As the sun crests the horizon, an owl screeches, and he stands and tells me that he has to go. I hold him close to my heart and tell him I love him, that he has always made me proud and that I will see him soon.

The notes of a red cedar flute stir me to my senses. As I look about, I observe the seemingly endless rows of white headstones of the Arlington National Cemetery, brilliant in the early morning sun. Live well, die well is our family credo. It is the way that my eldest son lived his life, an honorable man in life, as well as in death. A fallen warrior.

The flags of the honor guards are fluttering gently in the uncommonly warm breeze on this late February day. The voices of the "Red Feather Singers," wounded veterans all, can be heard singing a traditional Lakota ancestors' honor song. The gun carriage to be used to carry my son to his place of honor shines in the sun. As I approach the "Fallen Warrior's" horse carrying my son's boots, the four honor guards, twenty-four men strong, snap to attention. I place my son's boots

backwards in the horse's stirrups and attach a single eagle feather to its mane, as I had done to honor my father's ultimate sacrifice thirty-four years earlier. As I step back and salute these badges of a fallen warrior, the honor guards smartly present their flags and arms to honor him. The bittersweet tears of pride and immense loss swell in my eyes.

United States Marines, among them my second and third sons, impressive in their dress "blues," stoically carry the flag-draped casket bearing their brother-in-arms, the nation's most recent hero, with respect and place it on the deck of the gun carriage. As they retire in unison, a gust of wind catches the edge of the flag, causing it to gently caress my youngest son's face. My mind takes me back to a Fourth of July parade in Bristol, Rhode Island. My three sons, ten, eight and four years of age at the time, snap to attention and salute the Marine Corps Band and Honor Guard as they pass in review. My eldest son tells me with pride that he "wants to be the best," that someday he too will be a Marine. He always strived to be the best person he could possibly be, never taking shortcuts or deferring his responsibilities, a man that lived by his word.

In the distance, I hear the distinctive honor beats of the "Red Feather" drum; I feel the pounding of my heart in my chest. This signals the long, slow procession to begin its journey to carry my son to his place of honor. The honor guards snap to attention, each presenting their flags and arms to honor both my son and each other. One after another, they assume the respective positions. The gun carriage, with an escort of three Marines aligned on each side, my sons in the lead, follows; it carries my soul. I take up the rear, leading the solitary "Fallen Warrior's" horse. I momentarily falter, the tears fill my eyes and my chest tightens. I hear my son's voice in the wind telling me that he and all of our relations are with me; I collect myself and proceed.

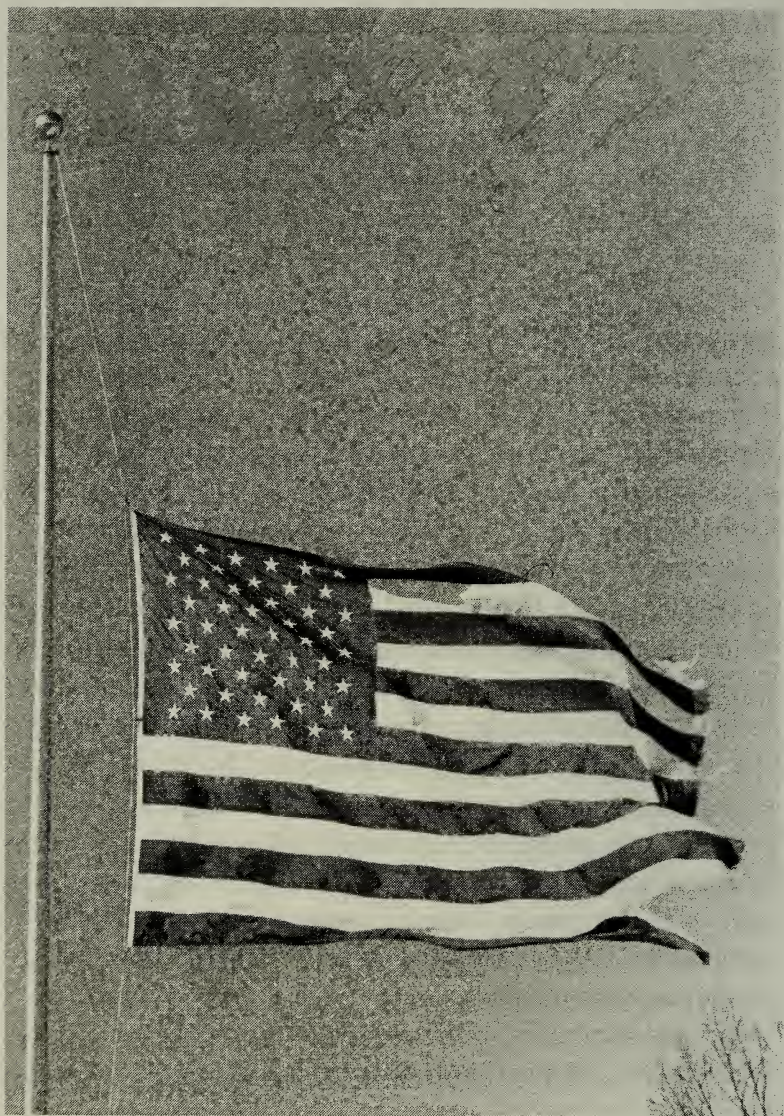
At his place of honor, flanked by those of my grandfather and father, the gun carriage comes to a halt. The honor guards align themselves, two abreast on each end of the gun carriage; the silence is only broken by the cries of a gull. My memory takes me back to the hot summer days spent with my children at the beaches of Newport, Rhode Island. I see a gull lazily drifting overhead; I see my children running up and down the beach, in the water body surfing. I can hear my eldest son, always the one in command, the protector, barking out orders to the others not to go out in the water too far and to stay where he can see them, and for his little, devil-may-care brother Nick to put his shorts back on.

The presence of a young Marine at my side brings me back. He respectfully takes the reins to the horse from my hands and leads the horse to its place of honor; I take my place at the drum. Tobacco is offered and prayers are said. As we start to sing the "Flag Song," the honor guards snap to attention, presenting their flags and arms. Eyes are on me as I deliver the honor beats signaling the singing of the "Fallen Veteran's Song" and the transferring of my son from the gun carriage to his place of honor. As I sing the song, I see my son carried by, the tears well in my eyes to the point where they stream down my face; my voice falters. The thought of his sacrifice and my pride in him push me to finish the song. The casket is placed upon the earth, joining my heart.

A Marine Brigadier General reads the citation. "For heroic achievement during Operation Iraqi Freedom while serving with the 26th Marine Expeditionary Force. On 12 February 2004, Sergeant Rory C. Murray led his Explosive Ordnance Disposal detachment on a humanitarian mission to the town of Al Muwaffaphali to render safe unexploded ordnance. While compiling unexploded ordnance, the detachment came under intensive small arms and rocket-propelled grenade fire. During the initial engagement, two

Marines were wounded. With exceptional composure and while maintaining his position near the fallen Marines, Sergeant Murray directed the orderly withdrawal of his detachment to secure defensive positions and coordinated helicopter air strikes against hostile positions. While covering the withdrawal of his detachment, he sustained two wounds. Observing that an Iraqi force was maneuvering to capture the two wounded Marines, Sergeant Murray, ignoring his painful injuries and disregarding his own safety, fearlessly rushed across the fire-swept terrain to the aid of his fallen comrades. Although wounded, he continued to provide covering fire and maintain communications with his helicopter air support. As a result of heavy ground fire, Sergeant Murray was fatally wounded. As he was fading into unconsciousness, his main concern was to have someone continue directing air strikes and the extraction of his wounded comrades. Sergeant Murray's resolute courage, unfaltering determination and selfless devotion to duty in the face of great personal danger were in keeping with the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service. For gallantly giving his life for his country, Sergeant Murray is posthumously awarded the Bronze Star Medal with a Combat 'V' for valor."

The words run through head and my heart. Though my heart is on the ground, I am filled with pride. I think of the impact this young man has made in my life. When I was young and impetuous, with my head in the clouds, he grounded me. When I was lost in the density of life, in the grasp of destructive self-doubt, he brought me back into the Sacred Hoop. When I was cynical about today's youth, he gave me hope by his example. I thank him for making me a better person. An honorable man in life and death. A fallen warrior.



Mourning the Columbia
Krisann Bousquet

Maggie Leone

The Snow-Covered Field

As the snow drifts down upon calming field,
I sit and watch from the comfort of home.
The snow is a soft blanket there to shield.
I seem to have a melancholy tone.

I drink the hot mixture that keeps me warm,
It brings me comfort when I am so cold,
I turn to see the branches of a tree worn.
I can see that the trunk is also old.

When I look at the fox that runs away,
I can see that he has nowhere to go.
Its kits are chasing, wanting it to play,
The fox just turns and holds its head down low.

For the long winter nights are cold and drawn,
And I can't wait for these months to be gone.

Maggie Leone

Sienna

as her eyes
open
for the first time
released
from the comfort within
so many new
possibilities
in a world
unknown
her angelic hands
reach
out for the slightest
chance
at a fair
future
her powerful yet tiny
grasp
takes hold on him
like a mini rainbow over the
vast
protective sky
she has so much
in front of her
and he will make sure
she gets it

Dan Prentiss

Gridlocked

How long has it been? An hour? Maybe more? Damn it's hot. Too hot for this shit. I should clean my car. I haven't cleaned it since... Jesus, I don't even know when. What's this guy doing? Oh wow, he's picking his nose. Does he think no one's looking? Shit, he's really got it in there. I shouldn't stare. Damn, I think he just lost his ring. Woops. What do we have on the left? A nice, new Mercedes. Silver. Good color for that model. The guy looks like an asshole though. Ya, he's probably some rich yuppie scum who wipes his ass with dollar bills. Jesus, when did I become so cynical? Christ, it must be a hundred degrees out. I should have told my boss off. The nerve of that guy. I been working there for too long not to have told him off. No warning, nothing. You think you got it made. You got your job security, your pension, your 401 K; you got everything except a warning. It's just like, "Hey, ya, sorry to tell you, your services won't be required here any longer, have a nice day." And they do it on Friday of all days. Mercedes man has a nice watch. Rolex probably. Asshole. They do it on Friday so you have the weekend to calm down. Monday and you'll go around shooting everybody. Whatever, I don't even own a gun. However, the stores are still open.

What the hell is going on? We haven't moved an inch. It's been like twenty minutes. I'm too old to go looking for another job. Whoa!! Who's this? Damn, she's almost as hot as it is outside. Blonde too. I love the blondes. What am I saying? I'll nail anything with a pulse. Is she looking at me? No, she's

probably looking right through me. Right through me and into the silver Mercedes. Young, rich punk. You think if I spit on his car he won't notice. No, no, no. Too many people around. What's this, are we moving? It can't be. I'm just hallucinating from this god-awful heat. I'm probably the only car with a broken AC on this god-forsaken highway. God, I hope not. There's got to be someone up there with a flat. Ya know, maybe there's a bad accident up there. If I could just see ten miles further, I might be able to tell what the hell is going on.

Uh oh, looks like we got a little domestic dispute in the Blazer. I wonder what the police call is for domestic disturbance in an automobile? Auto-domestic maybe. Automestic. Who knows? I don't even know if there is one. Wow, they're really screaming at each other. I wish they'd put the windows down. I can't hear what they're saying. Wait, that looked like a "fuck you." You tell him girlfriend, don't be taking no shit. Oh boy, I don't believe it, nose picker is at it again. This is too much. Maybe he's going after the ring he lost. I wouldn't want that up my nose. Jesus Christ, is he gonna hit her? I hope not. I don't wanna have to go up there and drag that sorry son of a bitch out of the car and bitch slap him. Who am I kidding? I don't even know what a bitch slap is. Is it with the back of the hand or the front? I just don't know. That guy's probably six feet tall, a boxer or wrestler, some kind of tough guy. So tough he's gotta beat up women. Mother fucker, I'd shoot him if I had the chance. If I had the gun. There I go, jumping to conclusions. He hasn't even touched her.

What's Mercedes man up to? Of course, laughing and talking away on his gold plated thousand-dollar cell phone. Who's he talking to? His wife? No, this guy? Definitely not married. Probably one of his many girlfriends. Like the song says, "Some guys have all the luck." Shit, how does the rest of

that go? Some guys have all the pain, some guys do nothing but complain. So what is it? Three sides to every story? Yours, mine and the truth. That's the way it goes. The cookie crumbles, the ball bounces, whatever you want to call it. Man, Blondie is looking good. Make-up time I guess. What shade is that? I like the dark maroon lipstick. Blood red nails. Dark eye shadow, but not too dark. She's got a date I bet. But with who? Her boyfriend? I don't know. This coffee tastes like shit. I'm beginning to think the highway broke in half and no one is telling the thousand or so fools waiting just to move up a few feet. Yup, that's gotta be it. Man, I feel like I'm gonna pass out.

What do I got for cash? Let's see, ten, twenty, twenty six bucks. Shit. I guess that'll buzz me up long enough for me to forget about my shitty existence for a while. I wish I could do something important. Something that has a good effect on somebody else. Blah, Blah, Blah. That just ain't the way it is. You try to condition yourself to the way you want to be presented. Inside, you're you and you know what you are. Strong, smart, weak, gay, happy, sad, whatever. You know who you are on the inside and there's no changing that.

Automestic couple seems to be doing all right so far. No blood drawn yet. Actually, I don't think they're speaking to each other at the moment. That's a lot better than battered heads I guess. Ha, Blondie singing along to the radio. I wonder what song? Ya know, if I wear my sunglasses, I can stare at her in the rear view as long as I want and she won't see me looking at her. It wouldn't be so bad if we stay in this traffic jam forever. I wouldn't have to find work or more likely be out of work or even more likely to go home and hang myself. Yup, we could all just sit in traffic for the rest of our lives. That's what life sort of is isn't it? A traffic jam. You move a little at a time then stop and think then go a little further then stop and so on and so on till you reach your exit. The big exit. I can't even see mine from here.

Mercedes man looks happy. Probably just closed a million dollar deal. The rich get richer. Wait a second, what's this? Rich boy got some white stuff on his nose. I didn't see him eating a powdered donut. Hmmm? Maybe he's got a little drug problem. He might just need a little pick-me-up every once in a while. Ya know, a little extra something to get him through the day. Everybody's got their own problems. Everybody has their own way of dealing with it. You either drink coffee, smoke a cigarette, do a little line, whatever it takes to get you through the day. Something, anything, to take the edge off. What happened to us to make us all be on some form of medication. We can't even go to the bathroom without taking a pill that tells us it's okay to do so. I mean, when did this all start? We have to take pills to have sex, be social, not kill ourselves, grow hair, control birth, kill birth, control cholesterol, control our cravings for cigarettes, god knows what else. Prozac, Zoloft, Zanax, Paxil, Viagra, Valium, Lithium, Vicadin, Rogaine. What's happening to us? What is making us so unhappy and confused we don't know whether or not to take the red pill or the blue pill? I just don't understand it. I'm sure it's a marvel of modern science and everything, and that this technology is helping a great deal of people, but we have become dependent. Nobody told you a hundred years ago, "Take this little pink pill and your troubles will be gone." No way. You just deal with it. Oh shit, what time is it? 5:30, time for my meds.

It wasn't that great of a job anyway. Stuck in a box, going blind staring at a computer screen all day. I shouldn't even give a shit. I should be relieved. I should be happy that I am free of the office cubicle chains that have bound me for too long. Is nose picker sleeping in his truck? That's not a bad idea, it's not like we're going anywhere any time soon. Rush hour? More like complete stand still hour. And this heat!! My flesh is melting. I feel like I'm made of wax. Shit, most of us

are. This is ridiculous. Police or some highway worker should come and let us know what is going on. What if some woman is having a baby or some guy is having a heart attack. That's how my father died ya know. Ya, one of his arteries tore while he was driving. He could have made it to a hospital but instead he ran into gridlock and died right there in the car. That's some bullshit huh? Maybe the government or the state should do something about that sort of thing. My father was a good man. A learned a lot from him. I think I disgraced him though. I turned out to be nothing like he would expect. I think I would disappoint him if he saw me today. A washed up, ordinary, now unemployed loser. Where did I go wrong? I missed my shot I guess. Or maybe I took it and I blew it. I don't know. Christ, the only hope I have is the hope of maybe it's not too late. Is it even possible?

I wonder what's on the tube tonight. It doesn't really matter, it's all garbage anyway. More bullshit reality shows probably. You want reality? Fucking traffic. That's reality. They should do a show about this bullshit. But no, they take some guy put him in a room with twenty-five really hot chicks and tell him to choose one. Ya, that's reality. I see that everyday, don't you? But then you have the real reality. The news. Right. Even the goddamn news has become a cheap reality show. Except the plot isn't get immunity and you won't be voted off the island, it's watch your back or you'll become a victim of terrorism. Seriously, when is the last time you watched the news and didn't feel scared in some way. It's horrible shit central. Rape, murder, assault, drugs, home invasion, kidnapping, terrorism every day at 5:00, 7:00, and 11:00.

Is Blondie looking at me? No. She can't be. I wasn't staring at her again, was I? Christ, I don't even know. Maybe I was. Quick, look away, look away!! Calm down, you'd think a woman never looked at you before. Oh sure, all the time.

I'm a regular stud. Oh shit!! Is she getting out of her car? She is. She's coming over to my window!! Oh my god, oh my god!! What do I do? She's almost here!! What's she going to say to me!! She has no reason to be angry, I wasn't staring that long I don't think.

"Knock, Knock."

Oh boy. Here we go.

"Look, I'm sorry if I was uh, staring, uh, I didn't mean to scare you or anything, uh, I'm very sorry, it won't happen again, uh, please forgive me."

"What? I was just wondering if you had a cell phone I could borrow, mine just died and I need to call my mother, she's in the hospital. I have to tell her that I'm going to be late, ya know because of all this traffic."

"Traffic, what traffic, I can hardly notice it ha-ha."

"Ha, you're pretty funny."

"Uh, thanks. But uh, no, I don't have a cell phone. You see that guy in the Mercedes."

"Yeah."

"I saw him using one earlier, you might want to ask him."

"Oh, thank you, I'm sorry to bother you."

"Don't be silly, I hope your mother feels better."

"Oh, thank you, bye now."

There she goes. She is truly beautiful. And once again I make an ass out of myself. OH-MY-GOD. I just remembered, I have a cell phone in my briefcase in the trunk. Shit!! It's too late, she's one got from rich boy. I am a colossal moron. Wow!! It's amazing how much of an idiot I really am. Could I have actually had some kind of a shot with her? I had my "IN" and I let her slip away. Just another missed opportunity on my part. I swear, if it wasn't for bad luck, I wouldn't have any luck at all. Something's gotta give. Anything. I wish something would happen.

Uh oh. Automestic couple is at it again. And they were doing so good. It's like a bad episode of Springer, "It's not my baby" kind of shit. Poor girl. She shouldn't have to take that shit. On the brighter side, the heat is beginning to subside a little. Instead of a thousand degrees, it's dropped down to about nine hundred and fifty. I gotta get outa here. I can't take it anymore. I think I'm slowly going insane. I can feel it. Along with my skin, my brain is melting as well. This is not healthy. We are in a state of unhealthiness here!! We need help!! We must get moving. The horns are slowly getting louder now. I'm not alone. There are others who feel my frustration and long for freedom from this wretched traffic jam. What can we do though? Nothing. Just sit here and suck it up. I'm tired of just sitting here. I'm tired of sucking it up. Something has to be done. We're not cattle. This isn't a damn herd. Wait a sec. He fucking hit her!! Son of a bitch!! He's still hitting her! She's half his size. What the hell!! He's got no right. Everybody else is just staring at them. Are these people blind? Are they just going to wait and watch this later on the 11:00 news? This is ridiculous. Why doesn't somebody stop this? Where's a cop when you need one? All right, fuck it!! I'll do it.

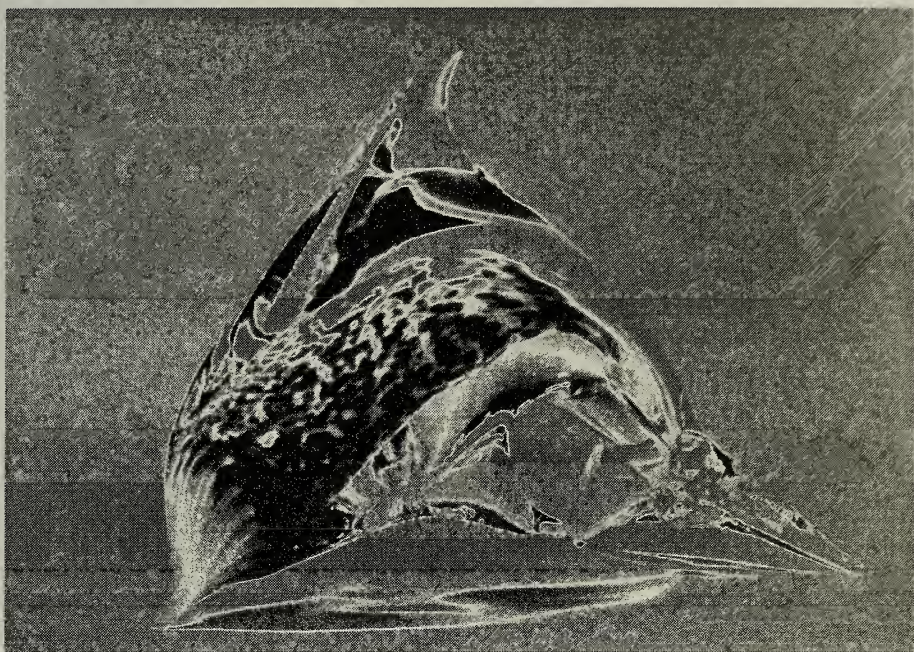
It's funny when there comes a time when all you can feel is hatred. Nothing else. It's just pure rage. Compassion for the human man has now escaped my body completely. I can only see red. It's like I have been transformed into something else. I can feel the pain of everyone and I can harness that pain into energy and unleash it on this poor, woman-beating piece of shit. The door flies open and he flies out onto the side of the highway. Pure vengeance flows through my veins. "Mother fucker, how dare you lay your hands on me," he says. I can't even hear him though. I'm deaf to the cries of this scumbag. One punch, two punches, three, four, five, six!! Teeth and skin fly through the air. Am I a beast? Right now, I

just don't know. For every tear that this girl is crying, this piece of shit bleeds twice as much. I'm in a world of my own. I'm high on a drug called hate. Not hate for the world that I live but for this one man, who, in my eyes, has done evil. I'm thinking, "This is justice, this is what this bastard deserves." With bruised and bloody knuckles, I stop and look down at him. He's crying and apologizing profusely. I slowly come back down. If I stayed up there any longer, I probably would have killed him. Calm and collective, I listen to his moans and apologies. They don't mean anything to me. It's her he should be apologizing to.

As I walk back to my car, I'm thinking, "I can't believe I did this." Like a near death experience, I stepped out of my body. Except I wasn't dead, I was more alive than I ever I have been. A wave of satisfaction washed over me. The people in their cars around me just looked at me. Some with fear. Some with admiration. As if they would have done the same thing if they could just let go of the weight that keeps them down. Just a few minutes ago I felt the same way.

These were the people that were afraid. These were the people that didn't care. These are the people that can't break free from the leash, the hand, the tie that binds them. These were the people that I used to be. It's true, the world is a scary, crazy, cynical place, but you don't have to take all the horrible shit it offers you. Everyone has a choice. Everyone *can* change, if they choose to. I now realize that I have a choice too. I guess sometimes you need to be right on the edge, almost to the point of no return, then you can realize it's not too late for you either. . .

Wait a minute. This can't be. Is the traffic moving? No, That's impossible, were supposed to be stuck here forever. It's true. The traffic *is* moving!!! Slowly but surely the cars ahead are moving forward. Now I'm moving forward. And no, I'm not hallucinating, I'm seeing clearer than ever before.



Andrea Maillet

Rebecca Helms

Soul's Quest

A lifetime ago
While I walked on the soil
While my existence was new

A lifetime ago
While I hunted the beast
While my thoughts were wild

A lifetime ago
While I lay awake in my bed
While my dreams troubled all

A lifetime ago
While I prowled city streets
While my pockets stayed empty

A lifetime ago
While I drove to the shore
While my mind sailed the skies

A lifetime ago
While I studied the stars
While my hands charted planets

Each lifetime before
I searched for your face
I longed for your heart

Rebecca Helms

Defiance

I wonder if the day will ever come
when the whisper of your touch
will not cause me to succumb
like the endless sea's engulfing clutch
then slow, it pulls away dejecting me
to leave goose bumps racing round
a never-ending chorus plays within thee
by the echo of your touch I am bound
every beat of my heart I hear you
every breath I inhale I taste you
every scent on the air reminds me of you
nothing else can I do, only think of you
my downfall I can plainly see refined:
poison of my soul, murder of my mind

Jennifer Corliss

I Am the Wall

Ahem, excuse me. I can see you all are very anxious to get started and it appears to be mid-morning already, and as we all know, the days of autumn are unfortunately short, so if we are all ready, let's begin, so we may make the most of the remaining hours of sunlight.

I'd like to thank all of you for coming. We couldn't have hoped for more perfect weather. It's hard to believe October is nearly upon us. I'd also like each of you to take a moment, to look at the people around you. Are you all the same age? Do you share the same color hair, eyes or skin? Are your bodies the same shape and size? Do you speak the same language? Do your voices sound alike? Do you call your God by the same name? Yes, we are all very different, yet we share common ground. We are all Americans.

Before I open these blood stained pages, I must inform you of their graphic nature. These raw images perhaps aid the author in their intent of leaving a lasting impression with the readers. This story doesn't begin with once upon a time and sadly doesn't end happily ever after. This is a story of courage, strength, and sacrifice. Tragically it is also filled with sorrow, suffering, and heartache. This story is about some of America's darkest days and the courageous men and women who lived them. This is the story of The Vietnam War.

I have been chosen keeper of this tome. An honor I consider great. I'm not your narrator. I'm merely a pedestal standing arms outstretched. I have traveled throughout this great country with this book in hand. I've visited all fifty states and thousands of towns along the way. I have spent the night

on many American Legion lawns, with only the stars as a blanket. I have displayed these pages numerous times. So many indeed, that the words have, forever, become imprinted in my mind. I could recite them to you word for word, all fifty-eight thousand and twenty-two, but that is not my duty. It's your responsibility as an American to read these words for yourself.

Please don't harbor any emotions you may be feeling on my behalf. I'm no stranger to sorrow. I've dried the tears of widows and cradled fatherless babies. I've held hands with grieving families and consoled the broken-hearted. I've saluted heroes who kneel sobbing at my feet. I have held in my arms a nation in mourning. Yes, I have seen much grief and sorrow.

Perhaps once you are introduced to these heroic characters you will be reminded of someone close to you: a grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, brother, sister, cousin, aunt, uncle or best friend? Perhaps you will recognize your own image reflected in these pages? Can you imagine yourself in their situation?

I pray that you take with you today a better understanding and compassion towards your fellow Americans. That you will learn to acknowledge each other's differences while embracing your similarities. If peace can be accomplished, then these brave men and women will not have died in vain. They sacrificed their lives for the lives of strangers. Be kind and caring to your neighbor, for tomorrow he may be asked to sacrifice his life for his country and its people. May these brave men and women always live in the kindness and tolerance we share for each other. Please, always carry in your hearts peace and brotherly love.

I can see you're anxious to get started so I won't keep you any longer. Thank you for your open ears and patience. I bid you peace and good tidings. May your God bless America, home of the proud and kind-hearted!



Shana Debois

Amber Shea

Shattered Slippers

Those who cast judgment,
Shall be judged themselves.
Who are they to accuse
And ridicule me?
I wasn't her legal guardian.
When did that become my job?

I'm a widow; will nobody
Have pity on me?
Did you see how 'Cinderella'
Treated me
Before the death of her father,
My dear husband?

She was Daddy's Little Girl.
Spoiled, no sense of respect,
Or what true work really was.
And you call me Evil Stepmother?
Call it teaching a lesson
Of what true work and respect really is.

Maybe I was a tad bit extreme,
But she needs to be
Put in her place,
For the way she treated me.
Everyone has the taste for revenge,
And yes, I can feel a human emotion.

I gave her clothes, food,

And a roof over her head.
What did I deny her?
Love? Who wants to give love,
When there is none in return?

Those who cast judgment,
Shall be judged themselves.

Nicky Smith

Needles Without Pins

I wouldn't want your back to break
Picking up pins for me
I wouldn't want you to think too hard
Beyond what little you can see
And I wouldn't want you to think of someone
Beyond the one you call "me."

The one who seemingly kindness thrusts,
Appears to be sewn with you through,
Is the one you can't trust
Whose narcissism will unknot
And attempt to defeat you
Let it you cannot.

Pick up the needle and thread his ego's mind
In doing so he will seem even less kind,
But you, he will see inside.

Lori Darcy

My Moth Dilemma

The day started out like any other typical working day. I was puttering around in the greenhouse, humming with the music from the radio. I was trying to fill up the time, since all my regular duties were done and I had another two hours to put in. I had pulled out tall and gangly weeds from under the chicken wire lined benches. I hadn't even bumped my head this time, as I usually do, sending small pots of herbs tumbling over, spilling soil everywhere. I even coiled the long, usually tangled mishmash of green and yellow garden hose.

I was surveying my sanctuary proudly; even though it wasn't my greenhouse, exactly, I took pride in everything inside. Outside the autumn air was cool and crisp, inside it was warm and humid and the greenhouse was full. On the benches to the right herbs of all kinds scented the air. The long, middle two-tiered bench was full of dark green chrysanthemums in clay colored pots, only a few of which had wisps of lavender, yellow, orange and burgundy just starting to emerge. To the left of the greenhouse pots of all sizes were filled with flowering cabbage and kale plants, white, pink and purple asters and multi-colored pansies. In between all of this sat a few hundred of your typical houseplants in various sizes and varieties.

Walking around the greenhouse, humming about three unrecognizable songs, I was eventually inspired to wash the dust off of some of the taller houseplants. I gathered my

sponges, a spray bottle filled with water and Dawn dish detergent, and a bucket of warm water. I then began the less than thrilling task of cleaning.

About half-way through my job, kneeling down on the small, rough stones, I moved a very heavy 10" black plastic pot filled with a tall, majestic, spiky *marginata*. Out from somewhere underneath the pot flew a dozen or so small, gray moths. I just whisked them away with the back of my hand. I was used to moving potted plants and finding all sorts of interesting creatures. I had encountered little brown snakes, green squirming lizards, mice families, oddly large gross worms and all sorts of flying things; after all, these plants come directly from Florida.

The moths were swarming back to their home. One apparently got separated from the others and flew towards me, and my nose. I suppose it thought my cavernous nostril looked a lot like the drainage hole at the bottom of the pot.

I have had black flies and gnats fly up my nose and in my eyes and mouth before, but never anything like a moth. It was about the size of a dime, gray, with that dusty moth residue, and it was flapping around inside *my* nose!

I let out a snort to try to blast it back out, but it must have already been too far up. I dropped my sponge right onto the dirt floor, stood right up and ran to the bathroom, which luckily was right outside the greenhouse. I grabbed a few wads of toilet paper, since I knew there were no tissues around, and started blowing. My left eye started watering, my sinus cavity was getting hot and I had that uncomfortably tingling sensation I get when I swim and water goes up my nose. That darned thing was batting around inside my head and just would not come out.

Thoughts I could not control were racing around inside my head; What should I do? Would it get into my brain? What if it never comes out? Where in my head was it? Is it

still alive? Is it dead? Was it really a moth? Am I just imagining this? How on earth would I tell anyone? I believed I must be having a minor panic attack, and I was breathing only in through my mouth and out, strongly through my nose.

At this point I realized I could try to flush the beast out. I got a small Dixie cup from the bathroom and filled it with water. I glanced up over the sink and into the mirror. Staring back at me was my own face, splotched red, with watery eyes and an oddly bewildered look. I desperately tried to snort some water up my already irritated nose. This proved to be difficult; the act of sniffing this moth up any further inside me was very emotionally disturbing. Physically it wasn't the easiest or most pleasant act, on top of what I was already feeling. I did manage to slosh a bit of the water up, then quickly blasted it back out...bugless.

Man, what now? Looking up at the clock, I realized only about five minutes had passed. What am I going to do? I could not feel it moving anymore, but it was still in there and I could feel it, or at least I thought I could.

A ring of a bell signaled that someone had entered the building. Oh, no! Peeking out from the bathroom I saw Jim, my boss. Relieved, I ventured out and even before he had a chance to say hello, I spouted out my whole horrible sordid tale. As I told him, his eyes twinkled, his mouth quivered, and when I finished, he laughed right out loud, shook his head and said, "Only you!"

So much for my knight in shining armor rescuing me from my captor, the evil moth, up my nose. I could only shake my head and sigh. As I did, I felt that sudden urge to blow and lo and behold my tormentor popped right out into the toilet paper! It was still alive...but not for long. I showed Jim to prove my tale was true, and he began to gag. I then triumphantly smushed him up as hard as I could and quickly

flushed him away, pushing the toilet handle twice, just to be sure.

I am happy to report it has been a few years since this tragedy occurred and outside from my regular nasal and sinus drippings, nothing out of the ordinary has, of yet, protruded from my nose. Jim, of course, has never let me live this down. Much to my relief, the moth left behind no ill effects, no moth larva, or incubated eggs. I must say though, whenever a gray creature with wings comes near, I automatically raise my hand to protect my breathing passageways, and I'll bet you will, too, from now on.



Shanna DeBlois

Rebecca Martin

The Answer

what is it that you hope to find in me, the answer?
the key to that final door that holds all the mysteries?
i am just another schmuck, stuck on this planet.
a little further along than a few,
but certainly not as learned as you.
on the mouths of babes are the answers you seek.
on the lips of children taught to hate before they can speak.
what is the use of understanding something that will never be
understood?
what is the use of believing that anything is bad or good?
who cares who's on your side, whether it be comparison or
pride?
we are all born on channel two, and maybe just a few
make it beyond that door that you're asking me for.

Heidi Saulnier

A Morning Run

Caitlin pulled her left leg behind her to complete her stretch and looked towards the lake. The sun was just rising and its early-morning red hues were reflecting off the flat plane of the still water and casting an orange glow over the trees. She took a deep breath and hopped up and down to get her blood flowing. Going running at dawn had become her religion, and she wasn't about to let her trip to her parents' summer cabin with Marley, Vanessa, and Rachel interfere with her new way of life.

As she headed towards the trail that circled the lake, she glanced back at the cabin feeling a slight pang of guilt. *What if they wake up and I'm gone?* She wondered, *Oh forget it, they know I run every morning—besides, I'm absolutely positive I'll be back before any of those lazoids get out of bed.*

Once she had found her rhythm, she found it impossible to be thinking about anything negative. Her heart rate stepped up a beat and beads of perspiration began to form at her temples and she felt the familiar rise of power flowing through her veins. As she rounded the corner, taking her from the small cove on which her family had their cabin to the larger, straighter path along the main body of the lake she thought, *this is what it feels like to fly*, and allowed herself the interruption of her perfectly steady breathing with a slight giggle.

She was finally running at what she called her “big time” pace (the stride she took for the majority of her run—faster than her warm up and cool down paces but a lot more comfortable than her sprint pace which she forced herself to endure for at least five minutes of her run every day), and was thoroughly enjoying the nature around her when she began to notice the change in the air. At first she couldn’t place it, but as she ran on, she realized that the pungent scent of pine and the crisp coppery smell of the water were fading. Some new scent she couldn’t identify was overpowering nature. She sniffed and concentrated... it was a sweet scent, but utterly unpleasant. It reminded her of the time she had left a vase of roses sitting on her desk for several weeks after they’d died and then accidentally knocked it over, spilling the remaining water that had held the festering stems. It was like that, but stronger and somehow darker. She hated to break her pace, but the smell had gotten so strong she had to cover her mouth. Stifling a gag, she stopped running and began to scan the area, trying to locate the source of the odor. Trees and wild unkempt bushes were the only things she could see, and that didn’t give her any clues, so she turned her attention to the thought of cutting her run short and heading back to the cabin since she didn’t know how far around the lake this would last. That’s when she saw the foot.

She froze. With her left hand over her mouth and her right hand on her chest she looked like the tin man having rusted in the middle of the pledge of allegiance. Her mind was telling her that she couldn’t possibly be seeing what she thought she saw. After a long moment she took a tentative step and peered over the bush that was partially in the way. There was no denying it. A body was tangled in the brush only yards from where she stood. She could see slash marks of blackish purple marring the bluish white of the bare flesh, and the leaves and pine needles around the body were caked black

in a sticky mess that mingled with a long fan of dark hair that only slightly obscured the face. The face... Caitlin stared, unbelieving, at the frozen mask of terror set in the bulge of familiar eyes and the silent scream set in the normal smiling mouth. She croaked, "Rachel" and the strength and power flowing only moments ago through her legs gave out.

A million thoughts flew through her mind as her body crumpled. *Rachel, that's Rachel. Oh my dear God, it's Rachel. This isn't happening, I just saw her last night...no, no I haven't seen her since she went to take a nap yesterday afternoon. Christ, no, can this be real? Could someone have taken her from the cabin while the three of us were right there? While we slept? Sleeping...oh God, no. Marley. Vanessa.* With that thought, the world came into focus again, and she realized she'd been vomiting. A shaky hand was wiping her mouth and she started, not realizing it was her own. *I have to get back to the cabin.*

She stumbled backwards, failing in her attempt to regain her footing, and found herself on all fours facing the lake. Her spine tingled and her body hair stiffened, she was overcome with a sense of intrusion that she couldn't place. With her eyes wide and her jaw slack, she forced every one of her five senses into overdrive. The lake and the woods suddenly felt alive and menacing, and she willed herself to place the disturbance she had yet to identify. She could hear it then... twigs snapping, leaves scattering, muffled voices, a cough. People were headed towards her. Her first instinct was to scream for help. She inhaled and opened her mouth to do just that when the muffled incoherencies she was hearing had become clearer and she heard a gruff, scratchy voice, "We have to get her before she gets back to that cabin." The scream she was preparing didn't want to die and she slapped her hand to her mouth, muffling the series of hiccups and wheezes that came flooding out.

Trying to stand again, her foot slid out from underneath her and left her sprawled on her belly. She flailed her arms and rolled to her back, sliding and bouncing like a fish out of water as she tried to sit. Scooting backwards to eternity finally ended when a solid tree trunk pressed into her back and she was able to use it for leverage to stand. The woods swirled around her and dark clouds threatened to blot out reality, so she bit deeply into the tender flesh between her thumb and forefinger. Pain jolted through her, bringing a tear to her eye and clarity to her mind. She sidestepped around the tree and began to walk backwards keeping her eyes to the area from which the sounds were coming.

Part of her wanted to turn and bolt, but a bigger part of her, the part that reveled in the power she ascertained when she ran, became angry. Angry, and a bit curious. She ran back along the trail for a few yards and found a cluster of bushes close enough to the trail that she would have a clear path to run if she needed to but dense enough to give her shelter. She was frightened by the men she knew were approaching, but confident enough in her body that she could outrun anyone—and too shocked to consider the possibility that they could have guns. She crouched in the bushes in a racer's starting position facing the trail back to the cabin and turned her head towards the sounds of the men as they approached the mangled body of her best friend. The consistent swishing and snapping of the footsteps came to a sudden stop and she knew they were in the small clearing in which she had discovered her dead friend only minutes earlier. She could hear that they were talking, but it was in low, hushed tones and she silently cursed as she strained to hear what they were discussing. *Come on you guys, speak up! What's going on here? Who are you, bas*—her thought was cut off by the sound of something heavy splashing into the

lake and the raised tone of the gruff-voiced man she had heard earlier as he shouted, "Damn it!!"

Caitlin's body convulsed involuntarily at the sound and she tensed at the noise she made from the movement, ready to run. Seconds later, she was reassured that she hadn't been heard with the sound of the second man's voice.

"Sir, look. There's puke over here."

The gruff voice replied, "The runner... she must've stumbled into this mess and lost it... she's probably headed back to the cabin right now."

"You think we can catch her?"

"We're gonna have to, Smith."

That was more than enough for Caitlin; she closed her eyes and took a deep breath. "Please, God," she whispered inaudibly before she sprinted from her hiding place and thundered towards the cabin.

It was the run of her life. She barely even registered the shocked sounds of the men as they noticed her fleeing. Her heart raced to feed the muscles oxygen as she pumped her legs and arms like she never had before. She heard the men scrambling after her, and knew they'd never catch her. A strange kind of euphoria encapsulated her; she knew the men were yelling to her, but couldn't register what they were saying—it didn't matter, nothing mattered except the movement of her body.

When the cabin was in sight, her mind began working again. Just a little farther... I'm almost there. I can get inside, lock the door, and call the police. Safe. I'm almost safe. At some point, she thought she heard the gruff voice calling her name, but it seemed so insignificant she hardly noticed and let her mind turn back to getting to the cabin.

She flung herself through the door with a victorious shout and immediately slammed it shut and locked it. Still facing the door and panting, she was listening to her own

heartbeat and congratulating herself when she felt something cold and smooth touch her neck. A voice that was both the gentlest and most menacing she had ever heard whispered in her ear.

"I've been waiting for you"

Sheriff Patterson saw the girl as she reached the steps of the cabin and he shouted, "Caitlin!"

She didn't respond. The phone call he had received an hour earlier replayed in his mind and he fought a shudder and pushed himself to run faster. That cold, dead voice had wakened him an hour earlier than his alarm.

"Sheriff, I've killed a girl. She's dead in the woods and Caitlin will be going for her run soon...then she'll be dead, too."

"Who is this?"

"Does it matter?"

"I don't appreciate these kinds of pranks at four in the morning."

"Awww... don't you believe me? You're the Sheriff, the big protector and savior, right? Do you think you can save Caitlin and her friends? Good luck."

The recognition of whose voice was taunting him came slowly and brought a chill deeper than he ever thought possible. As he sat there with the phone receiver humming dead air at him, he was almost sure his insides had completely frozen. *Sam? My son?* The realization that it *was* his son, followed by the realization that he *did* believe his son was telling him the truth on the phone hit him like a punch to the groin and he doubled over in pain.

When the shock wore off, he was filled with a sense of urgency and purpose like he had never felt in all his years as an officer of the law. He threw on clothes and phoned his

deputy in a matter of seconds and as he sped to the station his mind was racing with the clues his son had given him.

It wasn't long before he figured out which Caitlin his son meant; his own best friend had given his daughter free reign of their cabin for the weekend to celebrate the girls' reunion after their first year of college... and she was a runner.

Now as he ran helplessly after her, he begged the Lord to let him save this girl from the monster that had sprung from his loins. He never even noticed that with each step he took, his mind was chanting, *not again, not again, not again*. He reached the cabin and banged into the locked door.

"Caitlin! This is Sheriff Patterson! Open the door."

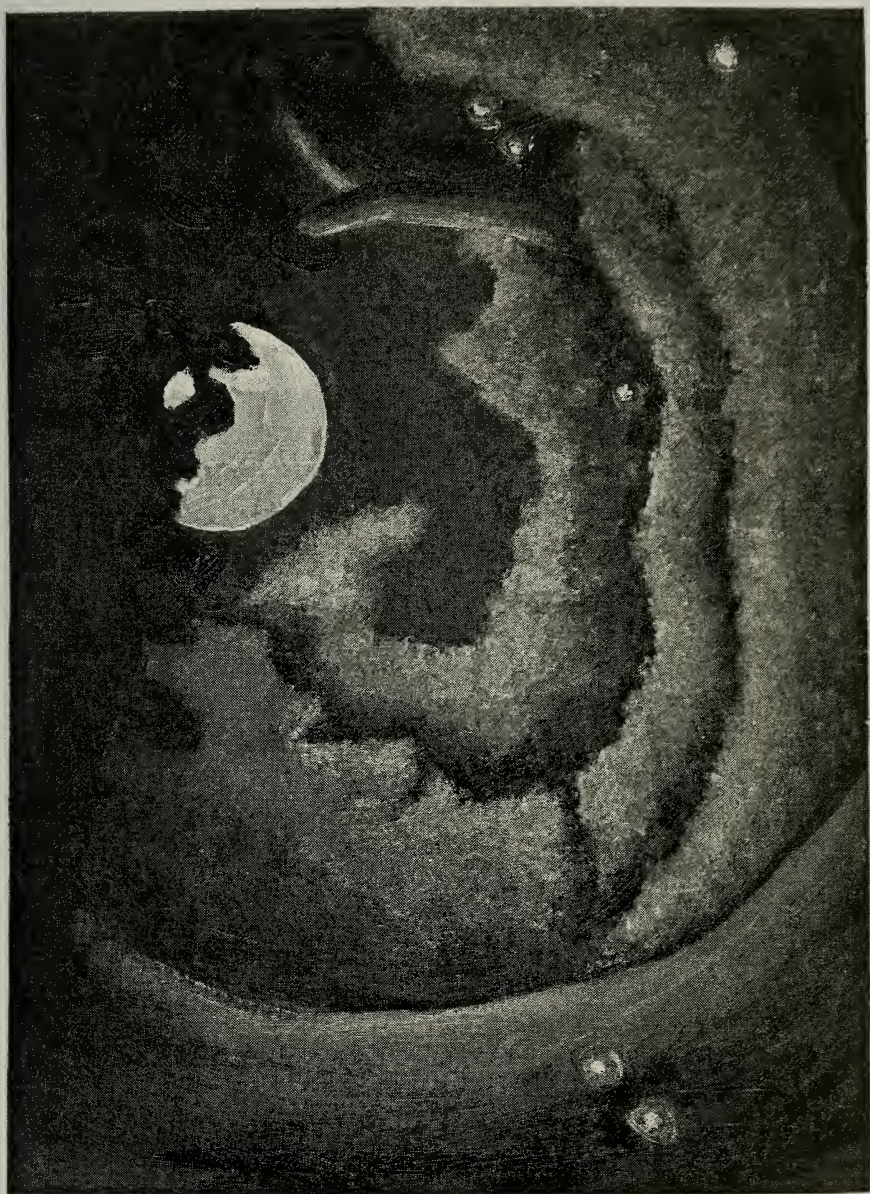
Nothing.

It wouldn't take much to break the lock, so he drew his gun and slammed a shoulder into the door. As he stepped into the room his gun was aimed directly in front of him—and directly at his son, sitting placidly on the sofa. He surveyed the room and began to tremble.

Caitlin's body was lying at his feet, just to the left of the door, and the blood that had spurted from the puncture in her jugular seemed to be everywhere—her excessive run had raised her blood pressure immensely.

Sam looked up at his father and the shocked deputy behind him and smiled, "Hey, pops, I've been waiting for you."

Sheriff Patterson pulled the trigger.



Shanna DeBlois

Susan Sayball

Just Picture This

Just Picture This
Bitter cold 13 below
Just Picture This
Cardboard box No socks
Just Picture This
Jail cell bars Abandoned cars
Just Picture This
Raging rain Absolute pain
Just Picture This
Run for cover Without another
Just Picture This
Frozen nose Numb toes
Just Picture This
Stay awake Not to ache
Just Picture This
Cold wind blows No extra clothes
Just Picture This
Eating trash No Extra Cash
Just Picture This
Growing old In the Cold
Just Picture This
Look ahead Who is dead
Just Picture This
What to do See it through

Marguerite Gadbois

Is love stopping love from following your heart?
Circling around and around again?
Begin being inspired because you feel it too
And two by two we're all dancing.
Stop the blaming, shaming, gaming
And just Be.
"And I'm sorry I don't know your name,
but what a beautiful night."
And so on and so on
And son, what have we begun and become?
To teach the truth then tell the truth
And stand by it while swaying trees guide you.

The Voyage

In his essay, "Self-Reliance," Ralph Waldo Emerson stated that, "The voyage of the best ship is a zigzag line of a hundred tacks. See the line from a sufficient distance, and it straightens itself to the average tendency" (25). Emerson uses metaphors to describe a person's voyage through life. The ship is man (woman), the sea on which it sails is life itself, the zigzag course, the direction which one takes through life. It may not seem like one is making headway, but when seen from above, the overall picture is clear. It is a series of small steps that lead to a destination. As I sail the oceans of life, I can only imagine what experiences lay ahead.

Just as Emerson used metaphors in his day, so shall I in mine. I am my ship's captain, and I command with authority. I am the helmsman who steers it with a steady hand. I am the crew who mans the decks. I do this to seek out knowledge wherever it may be. That is an abstract thought, but this is reality, for I am a sailor twice over. First, I was with the United States Navy, exploring the vast oceans, discovering different lands, and new people. I shared knowledge and experiences with others. I tried to find any similarities that could bring us together as fellow human beings and explore those differences that keep us apart. I do this in an attempt to understand how my existence fits into the "big" picture. I am also the skipper of sailboats and operate a vessel that has no need for mechanical engines. It uses the wind for propulsion. I hold the mainsheet in one hand, and the yoke of the rudder

in the other. The only sounds I hear are the seagulls above and the waves below as it makes contact with the ship's hull. While sailing, I find the inner peace that I seek. I am one with the world around me as well as myself.

When one wants to change the direction of a sailboat, one "tacks," by turning the rudder, and chooses a new heading. It's similar in many ways to an automobile operator that turns the steering wheel to head in a different direction. The same applies to life. Each decision we make changes, in some way, the direction in which our lives will travel. I was once told that when a person makes a decision, there are three possible outcomes. One involves making the right choice, the second the wrong choice, but the worst one of all is the third, indecision. When the right choice is made, one basks in the warmth of the spotlight. When the wrong choice is made, one must accept it and learn from it. Indecision can best be summed up in the saying, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained." An example of this is when people are sailing, should they tack now or wait? If they tack and change direction too soon, they might arrive short of the desired location. If they wait too long, they might overshoot their destination. If, however, they do nothing, they won't arrive at all. One would risk having to backtrack and try again.

There is an old sailor's saying, "Red sky at night, sailor's delight. Red sky in the morning, sailors take warning." If the sky is red at night, chances are that there will be good weather the next day. However, if the skies are red in the morning, a storm is expected to hit soon. Just as the weather affects the decisions they make, our lives are affected by the choices we make. The smooth seas can be symbolic of the good times when all goes smoothly or as planned. Life occasionally gives us periods of stormy weather or rough times. One must learn to "batten down the hatches," and ride out the storm. Sometimes if the storm rages beyond our

control, we must seek protection in a safe harbor or bay and wait for the storm to pass by. The secret is to know when one should err on the side of caution rather than risk disaster. It's easy to play it safe and not want to venture back out to sea. But a ship that remains too long at anchor will rot. A mind left unchallenged becomes complacent.

Throughout his essay, Emerson discusses his ideas on traveling. "I have no churlish objection to the circumnavigation of the globe, for the purposes of art, of study, and benevolence..." (34). Many great men and women sailed the oceans of the world in search of knowledge. It is the nature of mankind to search for answers to questions, to seek knowledge, and to explore. Can mankind deny what's in his [her] nature? The Mayflower brought our forefathers to this land in search of religious freedoms. Emerson even mentions such explorers as Christopher Columbus. Those voyages took place in a simpler time, when a ship's captain relied on skill, knowledge, and instincts. He used the sun and the stars for navigation. Today we are dependent on GPS and other high-tech devices to sail the oceans. Lost forever is the art of the ancient mariner.

Emerson mentions that, "Nothing can bring you peace, but yourself" (38). As we go through life, we must trust our instincts, our knowledge, and ourselves as well. We must not be afraid of making decisions. Throughout life, we must be willing to make that occasional "tack" and change direction. We should not put too much trust in fate, but instead take advantage of opportunities as they arise. This is supported in two statements by the author when he states, "What I must do is all that concerns me, not what other people think" (23). The other one is, "Insist on yourself; never imitate" (35). Be true to yourselves and don't worry about what others may think of you. Don't try to be or act like someone you are not.

Just as Emerson did in his day, I sail through my voyage of life. As I do, I ponder over what was, what could have been, and what is yet to come. I may not know what lies ahead, what new experiences wait for me over the horizon. The real adventure may be the actual journey itself. For each time I venture out into the world, I discover something new, and put yet another piece of the puzzle into place. Each piece that I place brings me closer to my goal. Each island I stop at represents a period of rest in my life, and increases my awareness of the world around me. But the voyage goes on, the quest for knowledge continues. And so, from one sailor of life to another, I wish you fair winds, may your course be true, and may you find the answers that you seek.

Work Cited

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Meghan Thayer

I Could Have Been

I could have been a pothead—
I could have been a tramp—
I could have been into D & D—
Discussing werewolves and vamps—
I wasn't a science whiz—
I couldn't catch a ball—
I didn't have the "right" fashion sense—
Nor the body of a Barbie Doll—
What I did have cannot be bought
I cherish it to this day—
I had the courage to be myself—
The courage to find my own way.

Juliana Boucher

Rose Blood

The blood of a rose,
That runs so deep,
It's not in life,
That smelled so sweet.

When the rose dies,
We try to keep
The petals fresh,
But we make it weep.

We press the petals,
Between the book,
What's not realized,
Is its life we took..



Andrea
Maillet

Sarah Leone

Last Hope

Father Renzoni walks down the aisles. The candles blaze fierce prayers on the right side of him. He looks over; one lonely man sits three rows from the front. His tears are heard throughout the walls.

“My son, God can take that pain away.”

“No, father. He can’t. It’s been three years tonight and nothing has changed.”

“Would you like to talk about it?”

“Father, nothing can help. Not even talking about it. Whenever I do, all I can see is her face. Those eyes. The blood running into them! The horror, Father, all I can see is the pain!” The man’s wailing and screaming echoes even louder now. Father Renzoni, trying to establish his thoughts, holds the man. He feels the man’s heart racing into his own chest. He feels himself weeping alongside him.

A few years ago, Charlie and his wife, Lorili, had been celebrating their one-year anniversary. They were planning a trip to go to Italy for a second honeymoon.

“Charlie, I can’t believe you got us this trip. I know how difficult it must have been to get these reservations!”

“I was thinking about the year and how rough it must have been on you. Your father said it would be good for you to go on this trip.”

Over the course of that year, Lorili lost her mother to a car accident. She was very close to her and losing that relationship was like losing a part of Lorili. She went to

church every Sunday and tried to get Charlie to go with her. She said it helped with the pain of loss and that God would help. Charlie never believed in that, but he also never put Lorili down for that.

It was two days from departure. Charlie was closing a deal with one of his biggest clients. He was in the advertising business. When he got the phone call, Charlie was just about to shake hands with the president of a major corporation.

"Charlie, you have an important phone call." His assistant's voice shrieked over the intercom.

"Elaine, I told you to hold my calls." He said sternly, trying not to get angry in front of his meeting.

"But sir, it's your wife. She said it was very important that she talked to you."

"Tell her I'll call her back in five minutes."

"Sorry boys, but the wife bellows." Charlie said to the gentlemen.

"Don't worry Charlie," the president said, "I got a wife at home that thinks an empty jug of milk is an international crisis. We'll talk about the finishing touches when you come back from your...ah...what exactly did you call it? A 'second honeymoon'?"

"Yeah, no laughing. My wife had it rough this year, so I decided to take her to paradise."

"Well, whatever you want to call it, I'll see you in three weeks."

Charlie thanked everyone, ushered the men out the door, and picked up the phone.

"Hey baby, that was almost perfect timing. What took you so long? Those men make me want to loosen my tie even more."

"A little uptight?"

"You couldn't even fathom how stiff they look. I even had to throw in a 'dumb wife' joke."

“Well, no need to fear, you get to leave work and be home in twenty minutes. I made those reservations at the restaurant for 8:30pm. That means you only have an hour to get ready. Do you think you can make it?”

“I’m sorry, but it doesn’t take me that long to get ready.”

“Yeah, right! You’re worse than me. Anyway, I’m going to have to meet you there. I had to take Dad to my brother’s house. So don’t be late.”

“And leave a gorgeous woman waiting at the bar alone? Never. Some smooth guy might swoop you off your feet and you’d forget all about me.”

“Then I’ll see you at 8:30. I love you.”

“I love you too.”

Charlie hung up the phone, picked up his coat and hat, and started to walk out the door. “Damn rain. Lorili hates driving in the rain.” He muttered to himself. “See you in a few weeks Elaine!”

“Have a great time Charlie!” Elaine’s voice trailed off behind him as he walks out the door.

When he got home, he checked the messages. “Charlie, it’s Jon. Look, whatever you said to those stiff necks worked. They’re investing even more than the negotiated price. Hey man, have a good trip! (Beeeeeep) Hey, it’s me. I just left Jim’s house and I’ll be on my way over to the restaurant. Don’t be late. I think I see Mr. Smooth! Love you. (Beeeeeep) Lorili, it’s Jim. You need to pick up Dad’s prescriptions. He left them and won’t let me drive over there. He said he hates my driving. Anyway, could you get them before you leave? Thanks! (Beeeeeep)”

Charlie rushed out of the shower and threw on his suit. “Damn it! She’s going to kill me!” He looked at the clock. 8:23. It took at least fifteen minutes to get to the restaurant.

Driving down the street, the rain was getting harder and visibility was very poor. He finally reached the restaurant. When walking in, Charlie noticed that Lorili wasn't at the bar. He thought maybe she had gone to the restroom. But after twenty minutes had passed, he started to get a little worried.

"Sir, we have been looking all over for you. You have a telephone call. He says his name is Jim." The deskman gestured for Charlie to follow. He started thinking about what he would call about. Could it be that Lorili had to go back to get her father's prescriptions and he's letting him know?

When they reached the front desk, he picked up the phone. "Jim? What's up? Where's Lorili?"

"Charlie! Get down here! We're on Pleasant St. by the old bank! It's Lorili! She's been in an accident!" Charlie hung up the phone and ran as fast as possible to his car. Car? Why should he take his car? It's three blocks away and would be faster if he just ran.

Charlie could hear the rain ripping by his ears and felt its sting on his face. Soaking wet, he had never run like that before. His heart was pounding, eyes burning, mind racing just as fast as he was. Around the last corner, he saw lights. Red and white flashing against the buildings, blue and white flashing against the rain. He stopped. Could this be it? Is that his wife? He saw a body lying on the ground. Paramedics surrounding this limp body. He slowly walked towards them. When reaching this God-awful site, he looked down and saw a woman. It didn't look like Lorili. The face was cut and bloody. He looked into her eyes and saw that it was the woman he loved. He knelt down beside her and picked up her head. A voice in the distance said that she wasn't going to make it. The driver didn't see her. The rain was coming down too hard. The driver was yelling in the background "I didn't see her. I swear I didn't see her."

He heard Jim and his father as well, but he couldn't make out what they were saying. Their voices were all muffled. The only thing he was focused on was his dying wife. The feeling made him sick, but he wanted to show bravery in front of Lorili to give her hope.

"Charlie, what happened?" she was only heard as a whisper. Her voice was slipping away.

"Shhh. You'll be okay. It'll be okay." He felt himself starting to tear up and didn't try to hold them back. He choked out a cry and just sat there holding her. "Don't worry baby, it'll be okay."

"Charlie, I don't feel good. What happened?" she started to convulse. The more she moved the tighter he held her. He wiped away the blood from her forehead, and tried to clean it from her eyes. There was nothing left for him to do but hold her. Those eyes. The sight of them burnt into his memory. He closed his own and still saw them staring at him. "Charlie, what happened?"

"There was an accident. You got hurt baby, but everything will be okay." He choked on each word. His tears rolled down his face and onto hers.

"Charlie! It hurts! It..." She stopped. A long, slow release of air slipped through her cracked and bloody lips. Nothing.

"Lorili! Lorili?! God no! Lorili! Don't do this! No God, don't do this!" He ran his fingers through her hair. Broken glass littered the once soft mane. He felt her cheek, and shook her body. "Lorili, don't go! Please don't go." His voice went hoarse. His cries ran down the surrounding spectator's spines. He hugged Lorili and squeezed her body. He couldn't let go. Charlie sat there, rain pouring down on him, for what seemed like years. The paramedics tried to take her, but he didn't want them to. If they took her, it would be the end. Finally, Jim walked over and put his hand on Charlie's shoulder. The

paramedics took her body, loaded it up in the back of the ambulance and drove off. Charlie stood up and grabbed Jim. "NO! GOD! Bring her back!"

"I know. I know. I got you Charlie, I got you." Jim stood there with his father and Charlie. His father grabbed the two men and they all stood there holding each other.

The next week or so went by, and Charlie was in a daze. At the wake he stood next to Jim, only a few feet away from the casket. It was agreed that the casket be closed because of the condition her body was in. Her face was swarmed with cuts and gashes and a couple of her teeth were knocked out from the force of the cars colliding. It wasn't Lorili lying there in the casket, but a lifeless, soulless body. Charlie couldn't bear being in the room with all those people staring at him and talking of the fond memories they had of his wife. After about a half hour of shaking people's hands, he made his way out with his head spinning and stomach nauseous.

The funeral was the next day. Charlie couldn't talk, never mind give the eulogy. So, her brother went up in front of everybody and spoke of her. Even though Jim did his best, Charlie couldn't listen to his "speech." He used the usual phrases like "she was a good woman," and "she meant so much to us." But even her own brother couldn't capture her for what she really was.

Finally, Charlie stood up and blurted out, "You have no clue how she really was. She may have meant a lot to you all, but you still don't know her. Her little quirks and idiosyncrasies... The little things she did when she was frustrated or nervous. She always used to bite her pinkie nail when she had to seriously think about something. I remember her always having to smell the milk out of the jug before she drank it," he chuckled at the thought of that. "She used to tell me it was to just make sure it was fresh. Did any of you know

that her left eye was a little greener than her right? Those eyes, they were beautiful. The way they showed emotion. Those eyes that were filled with blood."

Everyone gasped at Charlie's outburst. Lorili's father grabbed Charlie and walked him outside for fresh air.

"I know you miss her, son. We all miss her."

"I don't understand why she had to be taken from us."

"I'm not the one you should be asking. Only He knows why."

"Who, God? The all and powerful. That's a load a crap. He's the one that took her, why should I talk to Him. For all I care, He is nothing to me."

"He will give you the answers you are looking for."

Charlie left his job a month after her death. He couldn't bear listening to all the people trying to "comfort" him. Cutting himself off from everyone except Jim, Charlie crawled into a deep hole. Taking the advice of Lorili's father, he tried to go to church. On the night of Lorili's death, Charlie sat in the pews and thought about his life as a whole. He remembered what Lorili used to tell him, "Things happen for a reason. God never does anything on accident." But every anniversary he went and he still hadn't found reasoning or an answer.

"God took her away from me. How can He help?" The man slowly calms down after a case of hyperventilating. "Nothing can help."

Father Renzoni takes a deep breath and starts to speak, "You mustn't believe that she was taken away to punish you. God had bigger plans for such a young soul."

"She was too damn young to die. She had more purpose here and God didn't let her finish. Not only did he take that away, but he took my purpose away that night as well. He robbed me of her life and mine!"

“You robbed yourself. He left you and made you safe. It is your responsibility to continue with it.”

“I’ve tried, Father, I really have. It’s too painful. It’s just too painful.”

Father Renzoni guides the man’s body to stand up. He walks him over to the table of candles and hands him a match. “Let her know that you are watching out for her.”

The man looks up from the table into Father Renzoni’s eyes. He sees a smile come over his face. He looks at the match, strikes it, and lights the candle.



Gesetheme Angel
Krisann Bousquet

Leah Jablonski

With His Song

He had a long walk, and I had a car. It made sense, and I was happy to offer the tired teenager what relief I could on a working Sunday evening. I was not surprised when the day was filled with an extra lift and bustle; I hurried to match his long stride as we worked on our separate tasks. His smile brought me back to him again and again. I began to appreciate the subtlety of his humor and observations, sincere as only a bleeding soul can be. I began to consider him a friend.

There was a constant undercurrent of debt keeping our friendship stilted after a few months. That was the first time he brought a song. That Sunday night, I walked out of our workplace, and he was waiting with a pair of headphones. I gave him a puzzled grin as he tried to explain and finally turned on his music. It was a style I'd never heard, singing of pain and love as all songs eventually do, but so differently from what I was used to for lyrics and harmonies. I thanked him deeply and sincerely for the experience.

He may never believe me, in that self-deprecating way of the exhausted teenager, but I now look forward to driving him home whenever I can. That one song and the thought behind it outweighed anything I can ever offer him. He laughs, unbelieving, and calls himself a burden; but now that I have penned this, I hope he knows—I can't wait for Sunday night.

Dennis D. Carney, Jr.

The Word

In a moment of true reality, I sit and ponder many a word.
Mine and yours alike, I do not discern the two, for we are as one,
and as one we will stay.

My life I have modeled after yours, and I do so willingly.
I help those in need, and test individuals without faith, and
embrace persons with it.

I try to be righteous, and true, and never willingly do wrong.
There is so much I have learned from you, and yet I feel I have
always known it.

“The truth is the perception of right.” That’s mine, or is it yours?
I have trouble discerning mine and yours, as most people do.
I don’t know if it is the way I say things, or the meaning I give to
them.

I do so believe, and wish to be heard.
I have a message that transcends all times, and is the truth to
all that will hear it.

It is your message, and mine.
It is a message that will endeavor to be heard for all the ages.
For those lucky enough to hear it, and believe it, it will
transform their lives.

The message is simple; it is one word, the only word needed.
Love.

Amends

Some people would call me paranoid. Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, I don't travel by air. It isn't that I'm afraid of flying, what I am afraid of is blowing up in mid-flight. That and the long delays and the invasive procedures used at the airports. Besides, on this particular trip, I was in no hurry to reach my destination.

It had been only two days since the train left my home in the Colorado Rockies, but it seemed like I'd been riding for two weeks instead of days; I made a mental note that once I did what I promised to do I'd get a plane out of Providence regardless of my fears.

I woke up and glanced at my watch. It was just after 3:00 PM when I looked out the tinted windows. The pale green leaves had a bluish tint to them. I could tell by the size of the nearby hills that we would soon be arriving in southern New England. That and the fact that I had a schedule that had the arrival time at 4:15PM eastern. Thinking back a few days, I had to remind myself that I had already set my watch ahead two hours.

Before I could see the rocky coastline of southern Massachusetts, I could smell the sweet, long lost aroma of salt air. No, I was only imagining it. The windows were sealed; surely they kept out any outside air. Suddenly I felt a sharp stabbing pain in the center of my chest. SHIT! The doctors had been wrong! I am having another heart attack. I stiffened against the back of the seat, both hands on my chest trying not to breathe too hard, hoping that the pain would ease off. The

only thing that went through my mind was that the son of a bitch outlived me.

It took a few minutes before I felt relaxed enough to take a deep breath. After a few deep breaths, I realized that I wasn't exhaling the last of the air out of my lungs before I collapsed, dead on the seat. When it was apparent that I wasn't having another heart attack, I realized what had caused the pain. I would never admit it to anyone else; I would've denied it. Only to myself would I admit that it was the longing for my youth, my childhood that I was deprived of.

I finally arrived at the place that was home for me until I was twelve. A flood of memories attacked my mind; it was as if my brain was surfing the Internet on a DSL hook-up. Some of the memories were good, but most like my childhood were not. I'm returning to the place I swore I'd never return to while he was still alive.

While I had been thinking about the past, the train had reached its last short leg of the journey. To my right were the vaguely familiar docks that were set along the shore of Nasketucket Bay. Closest to the train tracks there were stacks of old wooden lobster traps in various stages of decay. In front of them closer to the docks, the newer and lighter rubber coated wire traps were stacked in neater piles waiting their turn in the depths off shore. No matter how many technological advances our society achieves, it will always take two men, a boat with a winch, lobster pots, and a lot of hard work to capture this popular crustacean.

When I sat forward to gather the few things that I brought with me, I noticed that my hands were shaking. This reminded me of my first day of school; when I was so scared that the first thing I did was puke all over the seat of the bus just as it pulled into the schoolyard. Why did I ever let Bob talk me into coming? I'm a captive. There is no way that I can slam on the brakes, turn around and head back to my real home, the

place that I've lived for the past 22 years. As these last thoughts were being processed in my over-active mind, I heard the high-pitched screech of the train braking to a stop. To me, it seemed like the train had heard me thinking and had decided that it was time for this nut to get the hell off and face his fears.

After waiting for fifteen minutes I called Bob. "Hey where you at?"

"Hi Mike, I'm running a little late."

"No shit"

"Give me thirty minutes." Bob is my older brother. We hardly knew each other when we were children. He is ten years older than me and my complete opposite. He is a full partner in a medium-sized corporate law firm. In his business world he goes by the name Clements or Clem for short. He says it sounds better than Bob to his multi-millionaire clients. If it wasn't for the unmistakable facial features there is no way I'd believe that we came from the same parents. In general I hate lawyers. Although I have no idea the type of lawyer "Clem" is, he too would probably fit into this category. The other side of him is my brother Bob, a decent laidback person who frequents the oceanfront bars (at least that is what he tells me). It amazes me how he fits in with the corporate world during the week then just as easily with his fishermen and lobstermen buddies on the weekend. One way he separates the two is that he has a condo in Boston and owns a house here in Fairhaven.

As I waited, the lowering sun reflected off the masts of the few sailboats that were still moored in the harbor. Most of the boat owners had already taken their boats to dry-dock for the winter. The blissful days of summer had passed and soon the ravenous storms of New England would be set upon them. My brain decided to go on its DSL surf again, except this time it decided on where to stop. The last time I stood here and the last time I spoke to my father.

“Michael, I thought the two of us would go fishing today. Jim told me that the flounder are hitting pretty good off Skipper’s Wharf.” That immediately sounded my internal alarm; the two of us never did anything together. When we did go fishing it was always with his drinking buddies. Finishing breakfast, I was thinking why today? The summer was almost over and I wanted to spend the time with my summer friends, who would soon be going back to their winter homes in the city.

Not realizing that he had been standing beside me, my father gently put his hand on my shoulder. Instinctively I jumped up, putting my arms up waiting for the first of the blows. This was the first and only time that he touched me without beating the shit out of me. He looked at me and said, “Car’s loaded, let’s go.”

We had been fishing for about two hours. The only words that were spoken had been from my father. This is how we communicated; he talked, I listened. Actually, I just pretended to. He had been rambling on about how his next business venture (blah, blah, blah) was going to make him rich. All my life I had been hearing the same bullshit.

“Did you hear me?”

“No dad, I was wondering why the fish aren’t biting.”

“Well, that’s because the tide’s going out... son, I’ve got some bad news for you.” What he told me next was the turning point of my young life.

“I’m moving out of the house; your mother and I are getting a divorce.” I turned my head away from him so he wouldn’t see the smile that was spreading across my face. (Maybe there is a God after all)

“Hey son, are you okay?”

“Yes, can you take me home now?” I couldn’t wait to get back and tell my friends the good news. Little did I know that in one week I would be leaving all my friends and the

ocean that I loved so much. Mom had decided to start a new life in Colorado. She made a deal with him. "You keep the house and I keep Mike. If you don't ask for visitation, I won't ask for support." My father didn't argue.

"Well, the prodigal son finally returns. I'm glad you decided to come."

"I almost didn't. I was going to back down. Liz talked me out of it."

"How is she? And the girls?"

"She's fine, sends her love; Megan and Sandy are stressing on what colleges to apply to. Next fall they'll be out on their own, sort of."

"Great, if you need any help..."

"Thanks, if they pick Ivy Leagues I'll take you up on that... it's been a long trip Bob. I could use a couple of beers."

"Good, it'll give me a chance to fill you in on the old man's condition, it won't be long now."

Bob pulled his truck into what would be considered a "waterfront" bar. It was about 300 yards from the bay. With the price of ocean front property going completely insane, this is the closest any bar in the New Bedford area is to the ocean. In the neighboring towns of Mattapoisett and Marion, waterfront house lots (if you can find one) start at one million per acre. The Navigator was on a side road off Washington Street. The newer looking Windjammer motel purposely hid the bar. As we were pulling into the gravel parking area, Bob explained how the bar and motel are owned by the same person, Sheila Rodriquez. Back in 1989 her husband Paul was the first mate on a scalloper out of New Bedford called the Navigator. Most years, around the holidays the entire fleet stays in port. This year the captain of said Navigator decided if they went out on a trip, which is usually around ten days, they could be back just after the New Year. The price of scallops would be high and

they would be able to double, even triple, their usual share. When seven days had gone by without any communication with them, the Coast Guard started looking. They were never seen or heard from again. Sheila and the families of the crew sued the owners of the boat and the insurance company. I represented them. I was relentless. In the end, I got every family 1.7 million each. I did it pro bono, so needless to say, I've got a lot of admirers down here."

The two of us sat in a back booth after getting a pitcher of Molson. The décor was nothing like Hollywood's version of a waterfront bar. There were no nets on the walls, no lobster buoys, shellfish, or anything else that resembled the sea. The majority of the clientele made their living off George's Banks. When they came in from a trip they didn't want to be around anything "salty." The wall opposite the bar was painted white with names stenciled in red. There appeared to be close to a hundred names. I asked Bob, "Those the names of men that have been lost at sea?" He smiled, "Not quite; that's the 86'd list. They've been kicked out of the bar for various reasons. Usually stealing or selling drugs."

"How about fighting?"

"Nope, that's allowed; as long as you don't stab or shoot someone... That happens once in a while."

During the evening, I met a lot of the local fishermen, all friends of Bob's. A few of the people I vaguely remembered from my childhood. It was apparent that my brother was well liked here. We were working on our third pitcher of beer, the table scattered with empty shot glasses, when Bob turned to me with a serious look. "How's the heart doing?"

"Doing its job. My cardiologist gave me a list of do's and don'ts. I quit smoking, gave up red meat, and lost 25 pounds, but I draw the line on the drinking. Liz gets real pissed when I drink, but shit I've got to have at least one enjoyment in life."

"I can't blame you there. I should probably quit, but fuck it."

"All right Bob, enough chit-chat how long did the doc give him."

"Two months ago. Somehow the old son of a bitch keeps hanging on. He's completely bed dependent, has a morphine drip with one of those buttons that he can push to control the pain. There's a nurse there from 6 am until 10 pm, of course I'm picking up the tab." Suddenly, the background noise got louder. The voices at the bar increased. In the back, the crack of the pool balls was deafening. Ironically, the jukebox was in the middle of Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven." Finally, Bob started speaking again, "You never figured it out, did you?"

"Figure what out?"

"Why I stayed friendly with him even though he beat the shit out of me until I got away from him by enrolling in Cape Cod Community, going to work and getting the fuck out of his house."

"I never gave it much thought." We both knew that this was bullshit. That was one part of my brother that I could never figure out. As an adult, he and our father spent time on the weekends going fishing, Patriot games in the fall, and dinner at least once a month.

"Whatever. What do you think the driving force in his life was?"

"Money and success, I remember all the half baked schemes that he thought were going to make him rich."

"*Exactly*, I became the success that he never was. He graduated from Columbia; I was educated through the state college system. I figured the best way to get a sense of justice for all the abuse was to stay close to him and flaunt my accomplishments in his face. When I took the Navigator case pro bono, it was my way of saying to him, "Fuck you, I'm so

rich I don't need the money." I think he eventually figured out why I did it for free, but he never confronted me about it. So you see, I'm as resentful towards him as you are, except that I took a different approach."

I didn't know how to respond, all these years I thought he liked, even cared about our soon to be dead father.

"Are you sure that he's alone in there?"

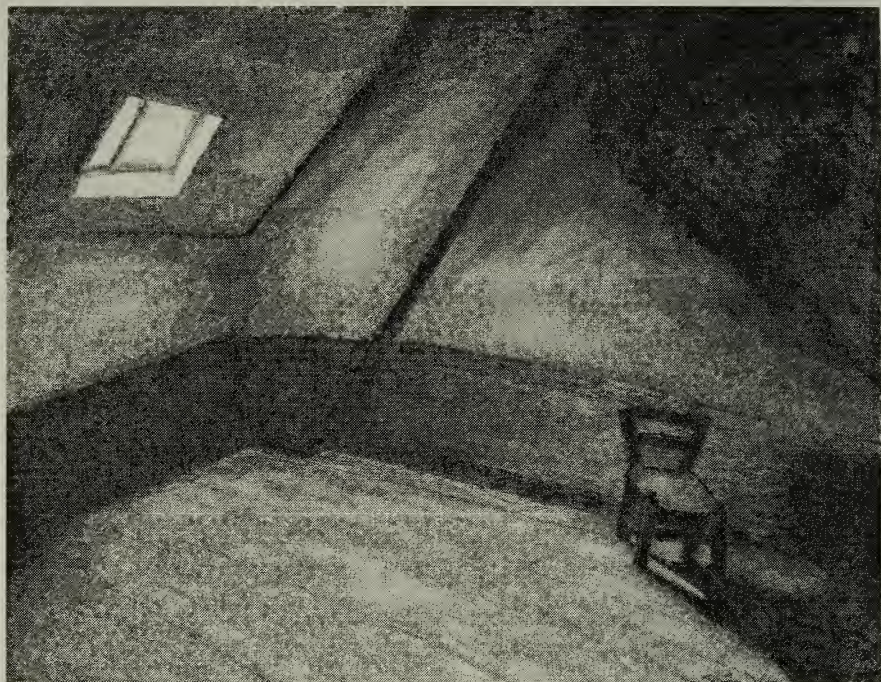
"Yup, it's 10:30. The nurse leaves at ten o'clock, besides her car's gone."

"Okay, I think I'll walk down to your house when I'm done here. I should be drunk enough to face him now."

"All right, good luck."

This is the best way to see him: at night and more than half drunk. Will this turn out to be a confrontation? Why did I let my hatred for him keep me away from here? Why didn't Bob and I talk about this before tonight? I'll tell you why, because you never allowed his name to be mentioned during Bob's annual visits. Hey Mike! Stop asking yourself so many fucking questions. Just open the door; he's in a bed in what used to be the living room. I opened the door and walked in.

If I hadn't known it was him lying there I never would have recognized him. What used to be the 6'4" 225 pound terror of my life was now a 120-pound frail, shrunken, cancer-ridden, and unimposing figure. After standing there for a few minutes, it was apparent that he was asleep. He remained still, his thumb close to the trigger that would send the morphine into his vein. I reached down to wake him up. Touching his arm, it took a minute for me to realize that there would be no amends spoken tonight.



Shanna DeBlois

Jeremy Durling

Ageless Advice

Ralph Waldo Emerson possessed a timeless wisdom and remarkable insight into the human condition. This is beautifully demonstrated in his short essay "Self-Reliance." Emerson speaks of the grand importance of discovering and understanding one's self, and offers valuable advice to those who may have been led astray. A weary traveler myself, I found Emerson's words shed some light on my situation, allowing me to discover details I otherwise may have overlooked, and perhaps fallen even further into the impending gloom.

"Traveling is a fool's paradise. Our first journeys discover to us the indifference of places" (34). Rather recently I found myself overwhelmed by my mundane existence. I realized I was mindlessly stumbling through the same activities week after week. My tedious agenda had become a sort of mental anesthetic. It had reached such a level of severity that I had truly lost all sense of time, and the precious months of summer had escaped me. I had come to realize that a stage of my life had silently come to a rather tame conclusion. Yet another period of naïve youth had slipped away from me, pushing me unwillingly just a little closer to what they call the real world. The road ahead wound deep into alien territory, this foggy sort of future entirely void of definition or predictability. My sheer terror of the unknown caused me to cling desperately to my past, and all the familiar faces I associated with those precious memories. Unknowingly

I was refusing to embark on a much needed adventure. Despite my mental progress regarding the situation, my fear was still too great a giant to defeat.

This most tragic discovery forced me to follow my imagination to distant lands beyond my field of knowledge. My reality consisted of a series of daydreams. I began to see a future told in a foreign tongue, one more melodious and provocative than my current clumsy stutter. I could already see myself perched comfortably at my favorite coffee shop—pardon me, *café*—pondering my existence over a frothy cup, blanketed in a haze of hand rolled cigarettes. I'm resting my body and expanding my mind after a long day well spent toiling in the soil of the local vineyard. What a wonderful life I would lead.

That's when I swam a little further into the philosophical waters of Ralph Waldo Emerson. "At home I dream that at Naples, at Rome, I can be intoxicated with beauty, and lose my sadness. I pack my trunk, embrace my friends, embark on the sea, and at last wake up in Naples, and there beside me is the stern fact, the sad self, unrelenting, identical, that I fled from. I seek the Vatican, and the palaces. I affect to be intoxicated with sights and suggestions. But I am not intoxicated"(34-35). Suddenly the haze of fine tobacco clears, and I come to realize that I'm not the one seated at that cozy *café*. None of my all too familiar flaws are present. When he speaks his words are carefully plucked from a seemingly infinite library of poetry and philosophy. His mind never breaks into a screaming gallop, leaving his mouth stumbling behind in a shower of verbal debris. Physically he is ideal. His chiseled features radiate a sort of elegant power, a hypnotic combination of strength and grace. He isn't lightly frosted with a thin layer of excess matter that seems to droop in only the most comical places. His confidence is the sort which attracts beauty with magnetic force. He would never assume

the role of the delicate wallflower, observing and pondering the surrounding hive of social activity, but with petals far too fragile for any real interaction. He is not my future; he is a figment of my imagination. He is a false image of perfection programmed into some subconscious region of my mind. He bubbles to the surface in a thin undetectable film, distorting my perspective. The further I explore his world the further I am from my own. "My giant goes with me wherever I go" (35). My giant has struck me a deafening blow indeed. I had somehow thrown myself into a coma, and by ignoring reality I was very slowly pulling my own plug.

As I had seemingly returned to the real world, I began surveying the current landscape, contemplating my future course. I found the arts to be an incredible expression of the human experience. I buried my senses in every great work of art I could find, and allowed my mind to frolic freely in worlds I could better understand. These lands had already been navigated and explored. They were safe and predictable. Once again my imagination overcame me. Suddenly my future was defined. I was the next Alex Grey. I would seek to gain a higher understanding of the human mind and spirit by experimenting with hallucinogenics, and beautiful canvases would record my findings. I was the next Maynard James Keenan. A systematic and complex combination of music and mathematics would allow me to establish a remarkable connection with my listeners, urging them to question authority while aiding them in understanding remarkably personal issues. I was the next Ray Bradbury. With a unique social perspective and an active imagination I would open my readers' eyes before it's too late. That's when Emerson shattered my perception once again. "Shakespeare will never be made by the study of Shakespeare" (35).

It was the wisdom in Emerson's words that brought me to a new level of self awareness. He allowed me to realize

that there's no need to fashion myself after the minds I admire. I admire these individuals for having discovered a creative outlet, for having established that connection with the world around them. My ambition is to develop my own creative vent through which I can share my perspective and allow others to understand the way I interpret the world around me. After all, "Every great man is a unique" (35).

Work Cited

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Self-Reliance." Self-Reliance and Other Essays. Ed. Stanley Applebaum. New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1993. 19-39.

Sean Johnston

Conclusions

Me and vanity have been fighting ever since I can remember
He used to have me on his side playing the pretender
December after December I felt my fragile heart break
Getting stuck with his arrows in the name of pain-sake
In order to find the lost conclusions that this estranged brain
makes

For who seems to always end up trying to burn it at pain's sake
As its shame giver
Eyes down finding myself looking at the end of the line seeing
only

Its quivers

Repercussions cause my earth to break with quakes and shivers
But upon arrival this one was built for survival
Made to look for pain and enjoy the gain of killing it on arrival
In memories from Friday the thirteenth
My secret lover's tempting me saying she's thirsting
But her thirst ain't worth the first sting of pain when entering
The most beautiful space between naja and her king
Plus now there is none
It's all been taken by the knowledge that pain brought was done
in wisdom

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